

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 189

IR 053 364

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TITLE Library Resources for Gender Balancing the Curriculum.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the 1990 Summer Institute on Cultural Diversity (Oswego, NY, August 23-25, 1990).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Differences; *Curriculum Development; *Feminism; Global Approach; Higher Education; Humanism; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Multicultural Education; Political Influences; *Sex Fairness; Sex Role; *Womens Studies; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Gender Balancing (Curriculum)

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that gender/women's studies are becoming an essential element of research and curricula in a number of disciplines. Several scholars of gender who conduct research in various disciplines are mentioned, and their areas of work are briefly outlined: Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Simone de Beauvoir, Anne Oakley, Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Carol Gilligan. Points about gender-balancing the curriculum, written by Peggy Macintosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, are summarized: (1) a candidate for a higher education position who is incompetent in scholarship on women is a poor candidate for several decades of tenure; (2) the time is past for the objection that Women's Studies is political; a curriculum that leaves women out is also highly politicized; and (3) an inclusive curriculum stands to benefit, and to change, men as well as women. She argues that our collective human survival depends on different processes from the ones set in motion in the past, and that no investment that colleges and universities can now make bears more importantly on both individual and collective human futures than does that of transforming the curriculum. A 44-item bibliography is provided. (SD)

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LIBRARY RESOURCES
FOR
GENDER BALANCING THE CURRICULUM

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Prepared for the
1990 Summer Institute
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Let me begin with a definition of gender from *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* by Maggie Humm, Ohio State University Press, 1990, a reference source I reviewed for *Choice*, the major collection development periodical for academic librarians. Gender is "a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or to the male. Contemporary feminist theory is careful to distinguish between sex and gender." In my review I state that the *Dictionary* "explicates those conceptual tools required for the understanding of sexual, political, and economic discrimination and delineates those analyses useful for feminist politics."

So, with this introduction, let me try to be, in front of your very eyes, "truth in packaging." When I teach about, do my own research, and work with students, faculty and members of the community as they do their research, I do not separate (make mutually exclusive) the conceptual tools of the new and emerging knowledge base on gender from the political analyses which are to me an integral part of gender literacy. I believe sincerely that the continuum of philosophy, theory, and practice is interrelated with

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the continuum of awareness, commitment and action.

Again, Maggie Humm's definition of gender: "a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or to the male. Contemporary feminist theory is careful to distinguish between sex and gender." (p. 84) Based on Margaret Mead's work, such theory takes the view that sex is biological and that gender behaviour is a social construction.

Humm lists scholars of gender in a variety of disciplines. Let me mention these names to you; those of us in Women's Studies are well acquainted with these scholars. Women's Studies has been working on curriculum transformation for more than fifteen years.

From Humm's list--

- Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone argue that gender distinctions structure every aspect of our lives by constituting the unquestioned framework within which society views women and men; gender difference, these radical feminists claim, is an elaborate system of male domination.

- Simone de Beauvoir approaches gender with another perspective. She was first to describe 'woman' as Other, 'not man'. The concept of *Otherness* underlies categories of contrasting characteristics labelling the feminine and masculine; for example, two gender definitions for women would be: 'hysterical' or 'angry.'

- Anne Oakley, as distinguished from Annie Oakley (after all, we are trying to downplay the Western heritage)... Anne Oakley and other sociologists show that attributes considered 'natural' for women by Western society are usually created by social pressures or conditioning.

•Feminist anthropologists ask us to study the significance of gender for the organization of social life so that we are able to conceptualize a future society without traditional categories.

•Theorists Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, and more recently Carol Gilligan, have examined pre-oedipal development, symbiotic gender arrangements leading to a planetary crisis affecting the human future, and identity formation which makes women relational and men separate and autonomous.

The theorists I have named in the humanities and the social sciences are but a handful of those who are building a new knowledge base of scholarship on gender.

-In each of your fields there are scholars known for their research and writing on gender.

-In each of your fields there are raging debates and issues on multiculturalism and on opening the American mind.

I would like to **share a select bibliography** I have prepared on gender balancing the curriculum. Now may I ask that we **go around the room, one by one, and name a scholar in our field** with whose work we would like to become more familiar. Please briefly **detail the major concepts, or research findings, presented by that scholar.**

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, and consultant to universities on curriculum integration and transformation, writes about what she calls "curricular re-vision: the new knowledge for a new age," in the 1990 book, *Educating the Majority: Women Challenge Tradition in Higher Education*. Here are some of her points about gender-

balancing the curriculum:

- a candidate for a higher education position who is incompetent in scholarship on women is a poor candidate for several decades of tenure

- the time is past for the objection that Women's Studies is political. All curricula are political. A curriculum that leaves women out is also highly politicized

- An inclusive curriculum stands to benefit, and to change, men as well as women. In the light of our global emergencies... our collective human survival depends on different processes...from the ones we have set in motion in the past. No investment that colleges and universities can now make, bears more importantly on human futures, both individual and collective, than does that of transforming the curriculum.

For the conclusion, have participants work in dyads to talk about interdisciplinary opportunities to gender balance a specific course.

GENDER BALANCING THE CURRICULUM:

A Select Bibliography prepared for the
SUNY Oswego Summer Inst. on Cultural Diversity
August 23-25, 1990
by Nancy Osborne

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